VIRGINIA WILDLIFE

DECEMBER 1998 ONE DOLLAR

A Year to Remember

Director's Column

William L. Woodfin, Jr

As the year comes to a close you may be asking yourself, where has the time gone? For many there is never enough time in a year to finish all those carefully planned projects. As the end of December creeps upon us, we often end up with only the memories of our hopes and dreams. For the hunter, angler, boater and wildlife enthusiast, 1998 will certainly be a year to remember. It was a year where the hopes and dreams of those who have supported the Department of Game and Inland Fisheries (DGIF) and Virginia's wildlife resources became a reality.

I'm pleased to reflect on the many accomplishments that were realized by the Department of Game and Inland Fisheries in 1998, for these accomplishments would not have been possible without the hard work and dedication of thousands of individuals across the Commonwealth.

The historic passage of House Bill 38, which redirects a portion of the sales tax revenues collected from hunting, fishing, and wildlife-related equipment, will generate an additional $12 million annually to DGIF. These new revenues will help assure that the management and conservation of our wildlife and natural resources will continue for years to come. The overwhelming support for its passage sent a clear message from the citizens of Virginia that the work being done by the department is important to everyone. I would like to emphasize that without the support from the many individuals, companies, and organizations, the passage of this unprecedented legislation would not have been possible.

Access to and the development of new facilities to benefit the sportsmen and women of the Commonwealth is always an important issue and the accomplishments in 1998 were many. Four new boating access sites were built and opened on the New River, James River, and the North Fork of the Shenandoah River.

The construction on the new Vic Thomas Striped Bass Hatchery is well underway and this facility will be in operation beginning in the spring of 1999.

Also under construction is a sighting-in range at the Chickahominy Wildlife Management Area.

A handicapped accessible hunting trail and stands on the Hogue Track of the Phelps WMA were built and opened this year, along with handicapped accessible angling facilities at Cook Lake (Alexandria), Locust Shade Park (Prince William), and the James River (Henrico).

Education is a key role in the mission of the agency, and this year, 1,200 Hunter Education Instructors trained close to 20,000 students in their basic Hunter Education courses. The popularity of recreational boating on Virginia's waterways continues to grow and the department is moving forward with its role to teach safe boating. With a volunteer staff of over 500 boating safety instructors, over 3,000 boaters graduated from agency- sponsored courses.

Tens of thousands of children were reached through Project WILD activities in our Virginia school systems. Also, in an effort to involve more teachers and students in wildlife-related programs, the agency's new *WildlifeMapping* program was fully implemented. In the first year, our particular emphasis was for educators. Over 100 teachers and 190 individuals or group coordinators participated. The program emphasizes collection of wildlife information and leads to an increased awareness and stewardship of wildlife.

Popularity of the Women in the Outdoors Program continues to grow. Over 250 women participated this year in everything from survival training to fly fishing and dove hunting.

In our continuing effort to keep the sportsmen and women safe, as well as looking after our wildlife resources, the department brought 25 new game wardens on board for training and further assignment.

It has been a good year for DGIF. With your continued support we are looking forward to the challenges that next year and the next century will bring. The role that this agency plays in making Virginia a leader in wildlife conservation is ever growing. Each year more people are realizing that if we are to exist with nature we must strive to find a balance that is beneficial to all. As 1998 comes to a close and a new millennium lurks over the horizon, I would like to leave you with this short message left to us by the Auamish/Duwamish Indian Chief Seattle (1788-1866), "We didn't inherit the Earth from our parents. We're borrowing it from our children." With that in mind, I hope all of us will continue to work hard for a goal that, I think we will all agree, is worth everyone's effort.

Mission Statement

To manage Virginia's [illegible] to ma[illegible] optimum populations of all species to serve the needs of the Commonwe[illegible] to p[illegible] and related outdoor recreation, to promote safety for [illegible] in [illegible] boating, hunting and fishing.

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Hunters in Virginia are looking for a great waterfowl season. For more on this story see page 8.

VIRGINIA WILDLIFE

Cover: Ruffed grouse are commonly found throughout Virginia's mountainous regions and mixed woodlands. Its name refers to the black, neck feathers, that rise into a ruff on the male bird during its springtime courtship and is often seen or heard drumming its wings while perched on a log. Photo by Leonard Lee Rue, III.

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Dedicated to the Conservation of Virginia's Wildlife and Natural Resources

VOLUME 59 NUMBER 12

A Story MARKED IN TIME

by Denny Quaiff

Great hunting stories are often talked about for many years. This 1961 account is one that is well remembered by some of today's life-long residents of Charles City County.

James B. Christian, who was nicknamed "Derby" by his childhood friends, has always been crazy about hunting. James would sit on the roadside in Charles City County as a young boy and watch the older men bring the deer hounds to the hunt club. At age 11, James started hunting with his older brother William.

In December 1961, 16-year-old James Christian may well have harvested the heaviest buck known to Virginia. Christian told me this remarkable story as we drove around Charles City County on a hot July afternoon. James explained, "It was a very foggy morning. At first light I was in a section of woods that was located behind the Belle Air Plantation. My brother, William, had taken the dogs to start the drive in the direction of our hunting party. The hounds opened in full cry. I had chosen a clay area in a creek bottom for my stand. The hound pack was putting on a hot chase and seemed to be coming my way. It caused me to get a slight case of nerves. With the chase getting closer and closer, I asked the good Lord to send me a deer so big that I could get my picture in all the hunting magazines and newspapers. When the chase crossed the creek the old buck was in my sights. I fired my single barrel 12-gauge Harrison and Richardson at the buck running broadside about 30 feet from my stand. The shotgun was loaded with No.4 buck shot. At the crack of the gun the buck went down. Stumbling to his feet he ran about another 100 feet where he dropped."

James and his hunting companions could plainly see that the deer was too big to drag out of the woods. Young Christian volunteered to walk to Dewey Marble's Store to borrow an ax in order to cut a pole. James explained to Mr. Marble that he had shot a real big buck and would bring the deer back for him to see.

Word spread fast throughout the Charles City countryside that a big buck had been harvested. The deer herd in Virginia was slowly starting to take off in the early 60s. People during this era were fascinated with deer. News of a big buck would often draw a large crowd to hunting camps and country stores.

When James returned with the ax and cut a hickory pole for the job at hand the buck was still too much to handle. James protested, but the hunters voted to field dress the beautiful buck,, and even then it took four men two hours to carry the prize animal out of the woods. When the small hunting party arrived at Marble's Store 75 to 100 people were waiting to see James Christian's buck.

The 12-point trophy animal had a wide and massive set of antlers. The hunters and non-hunters alike, who gathered at the store, could not believe how big the buck appeared to be.

James carried the old buck down the road a couple of miles to Haupt's Store. Family operated since 1893, the store was a State Big Game Check Station. Charles Haupt, who registered the whitetail for James, remembers the December day in 1961 well. Charles said, "I had seen the buck three or four times in the fall the year before." Charles' mother, Julia, who is now deceased, explained to the crowd at their store that she had seen the animal grassing in the alfalfa field beside the store during the summer. James said, "Mrs. Haupt cried like a baby and said that she would miss seeing the old deer around the store."

A farmer from the Wine Oak Plantation dispatched a set of scales to Haupt's Store from one of their hay barns. The scale was not big enough to hold the giant deer. The

Lee Walker

*Charles Haupt **(left)** and James Christian admire the antlers of the old buck. Charles is owner of Haupt's Store. It has been a family business since 1893 and is a Virginia State Big Game Check Station. The store has long been a gathering place for hunters in Charles City County, and is where James registered his big buck back in 1961.*

field dressed buck tipped the 300 pound mark on the scale and left witnesses in awe.

Matt Knox, deer project leader with the Virginia Department Game and Inland Fisheries said, "Data from the 1961 hunting season reported a statewide harvest of 32,875 deer that included 20,261 bucks and 12,614 does. In 1961, Charles City County was antlered bucks only, with hunters taking a mere 325 animals." Knox continued to explain, "A database for statewide recorded weights was not kept until the early 1990s. Over this period of time department personnel, working check stations throughout the state, have weighed 15,800 antlered bucks. And only one animal that was harvested in Dickerson County weighed over 200 pounds dressed." Knox went on to say, "During the 1997 deer season, Deer Management Assistance Program Cooperators in Charles City County weighed 215 antlered bucks with an average dressed weight of 93 pounds. James Christian's buck may truly have been the heaviest buck ever taken in Virginia."

James Christian's buck was never entered into any trophy deer contest the year it was taken. Back in 1961 the teenager was never made aware of just what he needed to do in order to display his prize antlers in competition. However, in August of this year Christian entered the trophy antlers in the Historic Division of the Virginia Deer Classic. The annual contest, sponsored by the Virginia Deer Hunters Association, was held as part of the 15th Annual Virginia Outdoor Sportsman Show.

Mack Walls, wildlife biologist with the Virginia Department of Game and Inland Fisheries, measured the antlers. Walls said, "The antlers show characteristics of an old buck starting to go down hill. The real trophy in this animal would have been his incredible body size."

Left: Shortly after harvesting his big buck, James Christian helped to create the "Big Buck Hunt Club." Since 1962, the club has grown to 38 members along with two dozen or so prized beagles.

Christian's non-typical antlers measured 178 9/16 points on the Virginia Scoring System. The long awaited opportunity to receive the well-deserved recognition came in the form of a citation that will hang alongside the old buck's antlers in James Christian's trophy room for years to come.

Virginia has three major trophy deer contests. The Eastern and Western Big Game Contests and the Virginia Deer Classic. The Eastern Big Game Contest is sponsored by the Peninsula Sportsmen Association. The Western Big Game Contest is held by the Izaak Walton League. Both contests are cosponsored by the Virginia Department of Game and Inland Fisheries. The Virginia Deer Classic is a statewide contest hosted by the Virginia Deer Hunters Association for their members only.

©Denny Quaiff

Mack Walls, wildlife biologist for special projects, scores James Christian's antlers while Thad Cherry, wildlife district biologist, records the measurements. The trophy antlers were entered in the Historic Division of the Virginia Deer Classic, during this years 15th Annual Virginia Outdoor Sportsman Show.

Each of these contests use the Virginia Scoring System for competition. Different antler classes are used in order to offer a fair chance for all those who enter. Successful hunters should save their big game check cards for next year's contest. The big game check card is required for entry and provides proof that the animal was legally registered.

James and his older brother William are leaders in the "Big Buck Hunt Club." The two brothers helped start the club the year after James killed his big deer. The club is in the process of buying two acres of land and remodeling their club house.

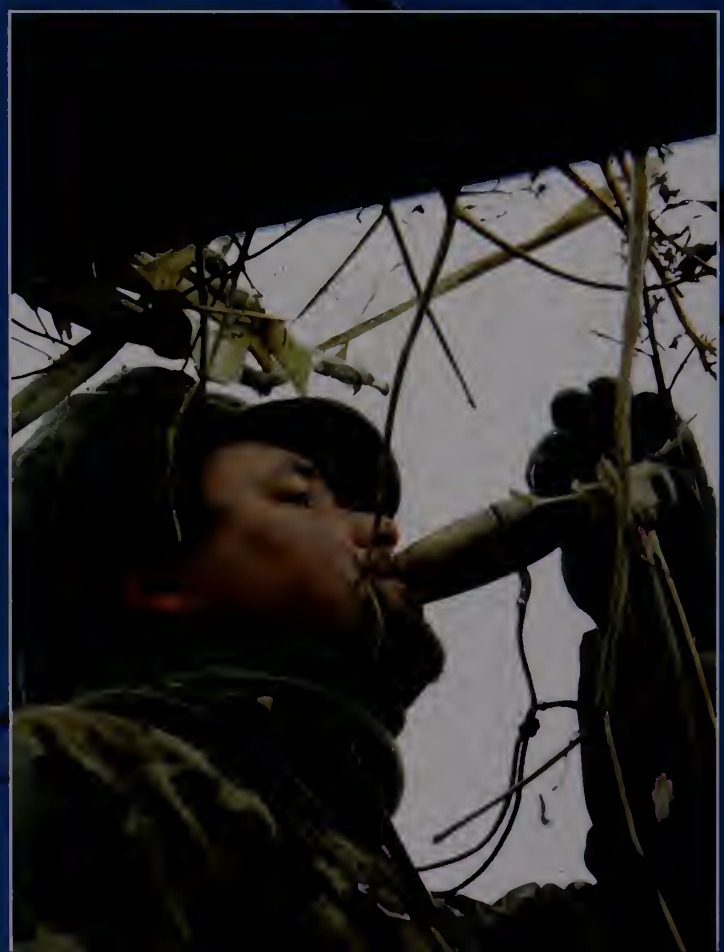
The Big Buck Hunt Club still follows the old southern tradition of chasing whitetails with dogs. The club owns and kennels 20 to 25 hounds and beagles that the members care for. Today, the 38-member club still hunts some of the same land in Charles City County that James Christian's buck once called home.

James said, "I have waited 37 years to show off my buck and I can't believe it is finally happening. Over the years people have promised to use my buck's picture and write about the hunt...it never happened. This is real special and I will remember it for the rest of my life." ☐

Denny Quaiff is executive editor of Whitetail Times *magazine, which is dedicated to ethical hunting and management of the white-tailed deer.*

Lee Walker

Virginia's Late Waterfowl Sea



son

Waterfowl hunters will find as winter's cold grip settles in, so do the ducks and geese.

"...there are four categories of outdoors men: deer hunters, duck hunters, bird hunters and non-hunters. These categories have nothing to do with sex or age, or accountrements; they represent four diverse habits of the human eye. The deer hunter habitually watches the next bend; the duck hunter watches the skyline; the bird hunter watches the dog; the non-hunter does not watch."

Aldo Leopold
A Sand County Almanac

by David Hart

Duck hunters, above all, are the oddest breed of sportsmen. A bitter cold, driving rain warms their blood and heightens their senses, and an icy trickle of water through leaky waders is little more than an annoyance. In fact, some waterfowlers probably even enjoy the misery associated with cold, wet feet on an otherwise miserable day. It simply goes with the territory and in many ways, defines a December duck hunt.

Virginia's duck hunters would be glad to know they have plenty of places to experience such awful pleasure. The free-flowing rivers in the western region, the vast salt marshes of the Chesapeake Bay, and every swamp, beaver pond and flooded field in between offers hunters a chance to bag a few ducks.

The huge tidal rivers that ebb and flow along the eastern edge of the state attract ducks by the thousands. Teal, which buzz through the state in early September, are long gone by now, and most wood ducks have moved on to warmer climates, but dabblers, like black ducks, mallards, widgeon and a wide variety of diving ducks, call Virginia their winter home. Only a rare hard freeze, accompanied by a lack of open water and food, drives the birds farther south.

According to statistics compiled by the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service, duck numbers are down slightly from last year, but still at record highs. Last year was supposed to be one of the best in decades. But no one told the ducks. Virginia hunters found low numbers of waterfowl throughout the entire season. That left some scratching their heads and questioning the validity of those numbers.

©David Hart

A late season duck hunt usually means steel-gray skies, biting winds and bitter cold temperatures. Bundle up, bring lots of hot coffee and stay ready for "fast flying" birds.

So what happened?

"Weather played the biggest factor in the fact that the duck hunting just wasn't very good in Virginia last year," said Virginia Department of Game and Inland Fisheries waterfowl biologist, Gary Costanzo. "We had such a mild winter that the ducks just didn't get pushed south."

Also, he added, was the fact that statistics generated by the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service, which makes an annual tabulation of the breeding duck population, reflected the waterfowl numbers in the prairie pothole region. Those glowing reports

*Canvasbacks **(upper left)** are the prize of any big water duck hunter. If you enjoy hunting waterfowl, Virginia's Eastern Shore and the Department's Back Bay Wildlife Management Area are excellent places to find good numbers of snow geese. Photos by David Hart.*

Steel, Bismuth or Tungsten?

Lead shot is illegal throughout the nation for all waterfowl hunting, but hunters now have several choices of non-toxic shot. Steel, tungsten and Bismuth are all legal and all do a fine job of knocking down ducks, but there are differences, particularly in the price tag.

"If money is no object, use the Bismuth," said Miller. "I noticed a big difference in the number of ducks I hit but lost after I switched from steel. I don't like to lose birds so I'm convinced the extra expense of Bismuth is worth it."

A box of 10 Bismuth shotgun shells retails for about $20. A box of 25 shells loaded with steel goes for about the same amount. If you can't afford the more expensive shells, limit your shots to close birds. Steel is lighter and therefore loses its punch within a much shorter distance. Tungsten is also heavier than steel, so it has a longer effective range, but like bismuth, it's expensive. Expect to pay about two dollars per shell.

Miller prefers #2 Bismuth shot over open water, where shots at ducks may be long. In tight quarters, such as over beaver ponds or along narrow rivers, he'll use #4 steel.

©Dwight Dyke

Many of the Department's wildlife management areas offer opportunities for waterfowl hunters. On one of the lakes located at the Powhatan WMA, a couple of waterfowl hunters begin gathering up their decoys after a successful day.

of millions of ducks reflect the birds that travel the Mississippi and Central Flyways.

"Not many of the ducks from the prairies end up in Virginia," said Costanzo. "We get plenty of divers like canvasbacks, redheads and scaup, from that region but most of our dabblers are born in the eastern sections of the continent. The number of ducks coming from that area is about the same as it has been for quite some time."

When it comes down to it, anything could happen when December rears its wintry head. Like last year, hunters could be hunkered down in a blind clad in a thin shirt, light pants and little else. Or if conditions are ideal, they might have to bundle up under several layers of clothes and bust through a skim of ice just to get a decoy spread set out.

"Last year and the year before were unseasonably warm," recalled Costanzo. "That just doesn't make good waterfowl hunting conditions."

So where's a good place to hunt?

Thankfully, the Department has worked diligently to provide waterfowl hunting opportunities all over the state, particularly in the eastern half. Even in Northern Virginia, where nearly two million people are crammed into a few hundred square miles, duck hunters can find public opportunities only a short drive away.

Eight public floating blind buoys are located on the tidal Potomac River near Dyke Marsh and a newly-created waterfowl hunting area is now open on the C. F. Phelps Wildlife Management Area (WMA). The Potomac River blinds are open Mondays, Wednesdays and Fridays on a first-come, first-served basis, and hunters must have a floating blind permit for their rig. They lie in Virginia waters on the edge of Dyke Marsh near Belle Haven Marina.

©Dwight Dyke

"We've gotten very positive feedback from the hunters who use those blinds near Dyke Marsh," noted wildlife biologist, Dan Lovelace. "Hunters get a pretty wide variety of ducks on the Potomac."

The Phelps WMA waterfowl area consists of an 18-acre pond with two blinds that hold up to three people each. During the late duck season, the area will be open only on Saturdays by lottery, and Lovelace ex-

It is important that all hunters use good common sense and closely follow safety procedures while hunting from a boat or stationary blind. Late season waterfowl hunting usually means cold weather and cold water. Both can be deadly if you're not prepared.

pects excellent hunting opportunities for a variety of ducks.

"We planted the area with Japanese millet and native vegetation before the pond was filled, and we have seen quite a few birds use the area," he said. "We also have a boat available for hunters to use to retrieve decoys and birds. The water is too deep to wade in some places."

Ducks Unlimited helped pay for the pond's construction, and the Rappahannock Chapter of Waterfowl USA built the two blinds with their own funds.

Costanzo pointed to the public hunting areas around Back Bay as having superb waterfowl opportunities. Hunters will find an abundance of ducks. Snow geese and tundra swans are also regular visitors to these areas. Of course, hunters need a special permit to hunt swans, and large decoy spreads are the rule for snow geese.

Saxis WMA, located on the Eastern Shore, is a vast tidal marsh that attracts a number of species of ducks. Dabblers, divers and sea ducks are common here.

"Hog Island WMA can be real good, also," he said. "We manipulate the waterfowl habitat and control the number of hunters, so the birds aren't over-hunted."

Several other WMAs have duck hunting opportunities, and a few have ideal habitat. The best way to find a good public waterfowl hunting area near you is to consult the Department's *Guide to Virginia's Wildlife Management Areas*.

In the western part of the state, hunters are generally limited to the rivers that twist their way through the mountains. Moving water, however, means open water right through the coldest days, and that's often all a duck hunter needs to have a successful day. Mallards, black ducks and an assortment of other species frequent such rivers as the Shenandoah, James and New. Float hunting is a popular method on moving water and some hunters simply conceal themselves behind an island and throw out a dozen or so decoys and wait.

Success depends on any number of factors, but late in the season, ducks become wise to sloppy spreads and mediocre calling. Hunting pressure is what makes late-season duck hunting such a challenge. Birds that have traveled the Atlantic Flyway have seen just about every fake duck on the market and heard every highball call there is and they are, in short, much wiser by the time they make it to Virginia.

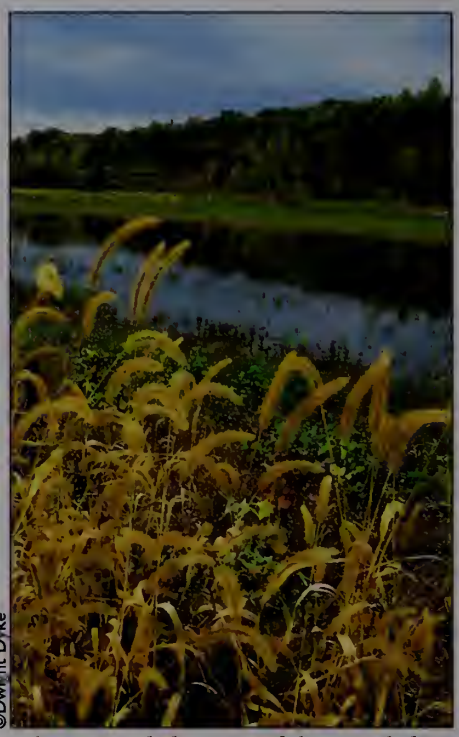
Hank Miller, a lifelong waterfowl hunter and Ducks Unlimited's Virginia State chairman from 1994 to 1996, pays closest attention to the weather during the late season. "The absolute best time to be out during the late season is on a cold, windy day," he said. "If it's real windy, those birds aren't going to sit out in the middle of open water like they would on a calm day. They are going to seek shelter."

I also try to time my outings so that I'm in my blind before a weather front arrives. All types of wildlife are active right before a storm and ducks are no different."

Wind is a duck hunter's friend for several reasons. First, added Miller, it conceals your movement. That's vital. Ducks approaching from above have seen impatient hunters squirm and wiggle in their blinds throughout the season. Sit still and keep your head down, insisted Miller, and you might get some shooting.

"Follow the birds with your eyes, not your head," he added.

Wind also adds some life to an otherwise lifeless decoy spread. Early in the season, ducks don't seem to care if your decoys sit motionless, but after the shooting starts, they'll flare well outside shooting range almost every time. A steady breeze pushes decoys around and brings them to life.



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The recent dedication of the C.F. Phelps WMA wetland restoration project was made possible with donations from organizations like Ducks Unlimited, Waterfowl USA, The Chespeake Bay Foundation, Colonial Circuits, Inc. and the Virginia Department of Game and Inland Fisheries.

"I think it's also important to clean up your decoys toward the end of the season. They have to look real, or the ducks won't give them a second look," said Miller. Clean and repaint them to help bring them to life.

Another good, late season tactic is to simply find an area that hasn't been hunted hard. Miller likes to switch blinds as often as possible, and will even search for out-of-the-way places that receive little hunting pressure. Beaver ponds are one of his favorite areas for late season hunting.

Of course, duck hunters aren't the only ones who have late season hunting opportunities. Despite the dismal outlook for migratory Canada geese, hunters have hundreds of thousands of resident geese to hunt. Combine that with a season that extends well into February and the possibilities are endless.

Just like late season ducks, resident geese grow wise after a few close encounters with hunters, so use care in your decoy placement, calling technique and blind setup.

Above all, remember to use extreme caution this time of year. Duck hunters die every year after they capsize their boats or slip and fall into deep water. A little moisture down your boot only adds to the experience, but too much water combined with bitter cold temperatures can kill you. ☐

David Hart is an outdoor writer for Journal Newspapers *in Northern Virginia.*

For a complete list of the wildlife management areas that have waterfowl hunting opportunities, send for a copy of the Department's "Guide to Virginia's Wildlife Management Areas." The 68-page, full-color book details all of the state's 29 WMAs and provides descriptions, maps and directions. No waterfowl hunter should be without one of these handy books.

Send your check for $5.00, made payable to VIB, P.O. Box 27563, Richmond, VA 23261. Or you may obtain a free copy by coming by the Department's Richmond Office or one of the five regional offices. (See gray card for addresses).

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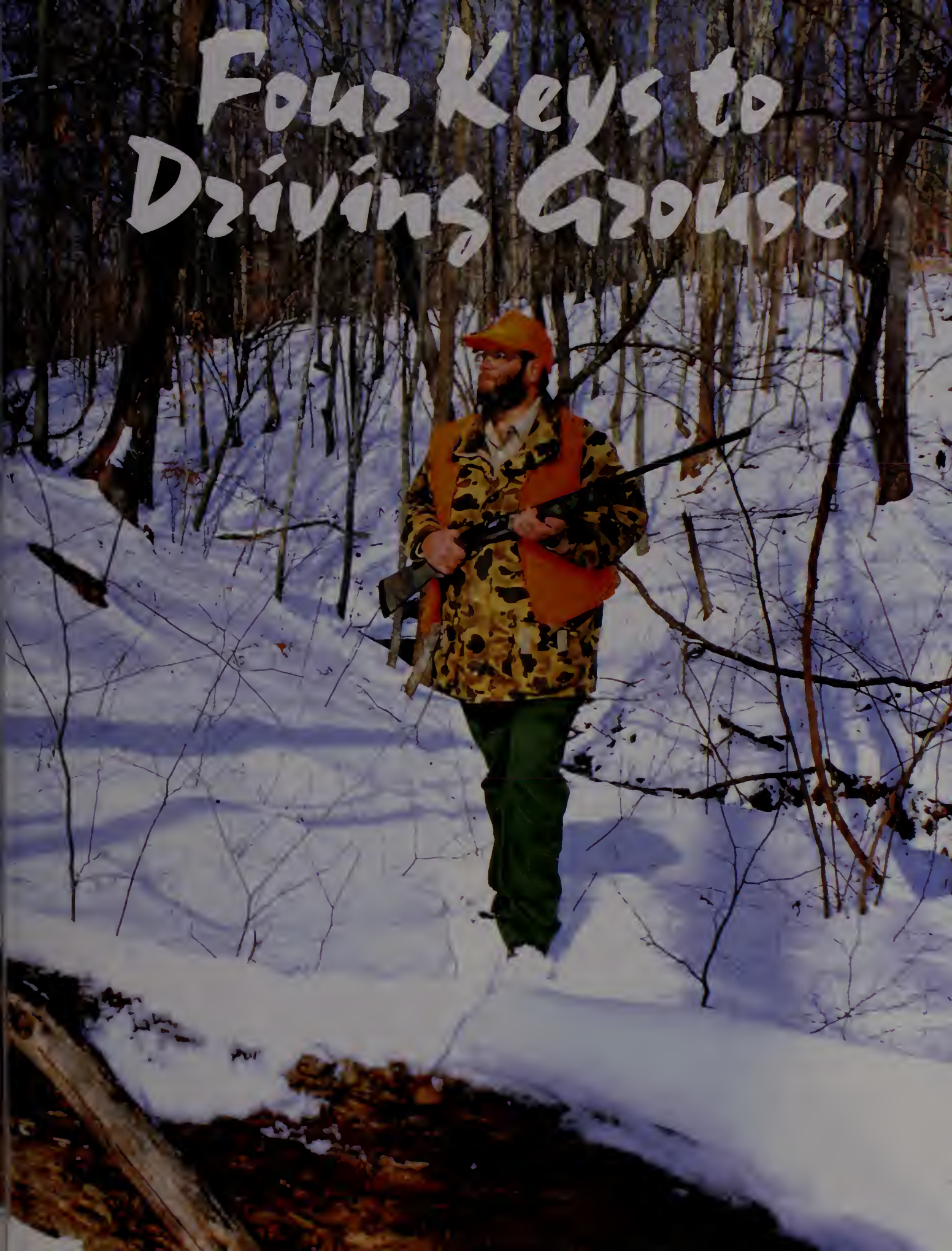
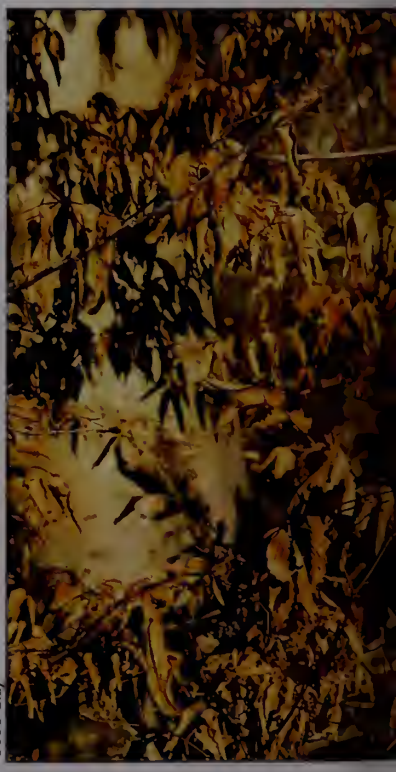
Four Keys to Driving Grouse



Grouse cover is almost always tight and when making drives hunters should follow a few safety tips. Wear blaze orange, keep a good distance from the hunter next to you and plan a safe route when walking up birds.



©Soc Clay

If you plan to hunt grouse without the aid of a dog, then here are some helpful tips guaranteed to drum-up success.

by John Robbins

Like most serious grouse hunters, I'd love to own and hunt over the perfect grouse dog. Unfortunately, my living circumstances don't allow me to keep one. But disappointing as that fact is, there is a bright side to it.

Not having a dog has made me a better grouse hunter.

Hunting without a dog has forced me to develop manmade ways to flush birds *and* get high-percentage shots. After a lot of trial and error and a lot more planning and experimentation, I've learned that two hunters without a dog can frequently execute a successful "grouse drive."

The Four Keys

There are four keys to make it work. First, from a safety standpoint, you need a cooperative partner and plenty of blaze orange. Second, you need to know the cover well. Third, you need to realize that, in this type of hunting, success depends mostly on what you do *before* the bird flushes. Finally, you need to know a few simple patterns of travel in which one hunter will commonly flush a grouse toward the other.

1. Safety

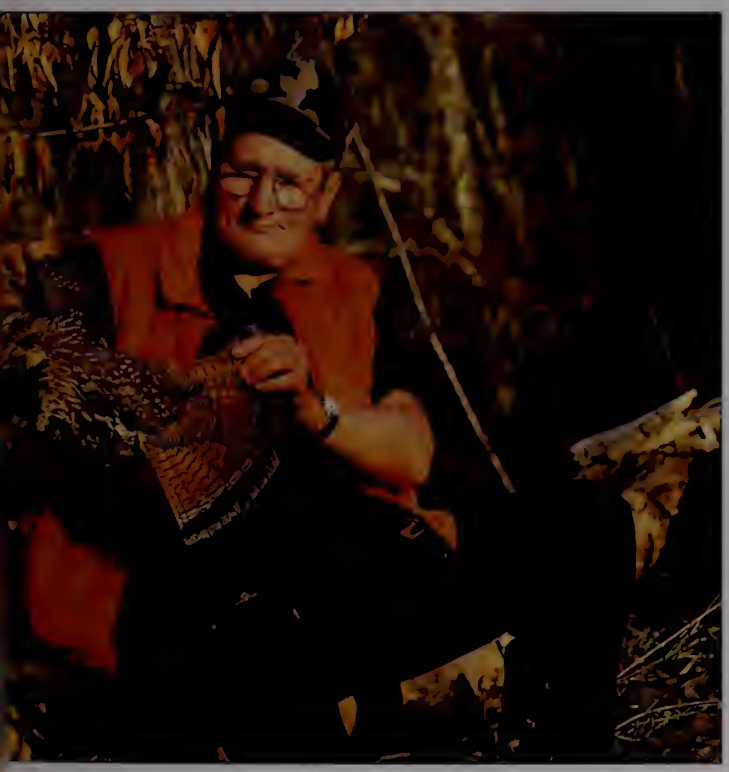
Grouse drives tend to put some distance between two hunters, which also happens frequently enough when hunting with a dog. Normally, when you can't see your partner or don't know where he is, the potential for an accident increases. Wearing plenty of blaze orange is advisable. More important, perhaps, is that safety depends on having a partner who will stick to a planned travel route—one designed to prevent accidents as well as flush birds.

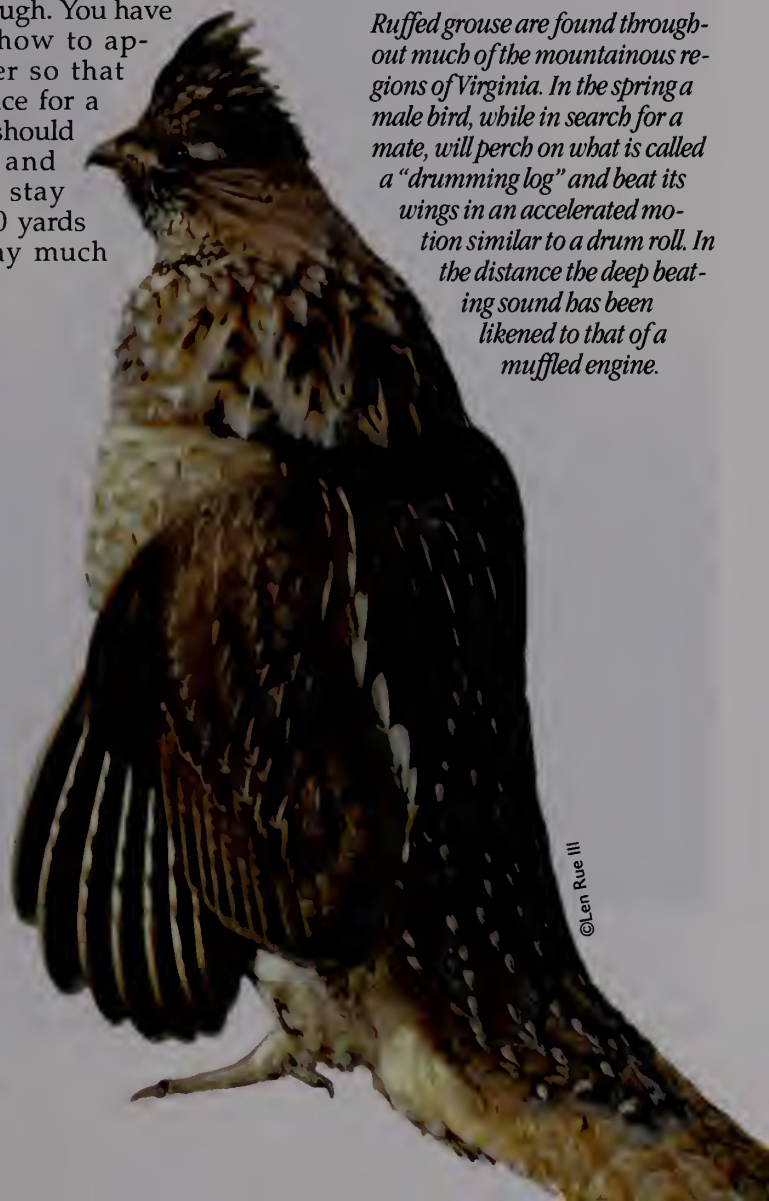
If both hunters know the cover well, and agree to walk a route that eliminates the chance of shooting toward each other, there should be no safety problem.

2. Know the Cover

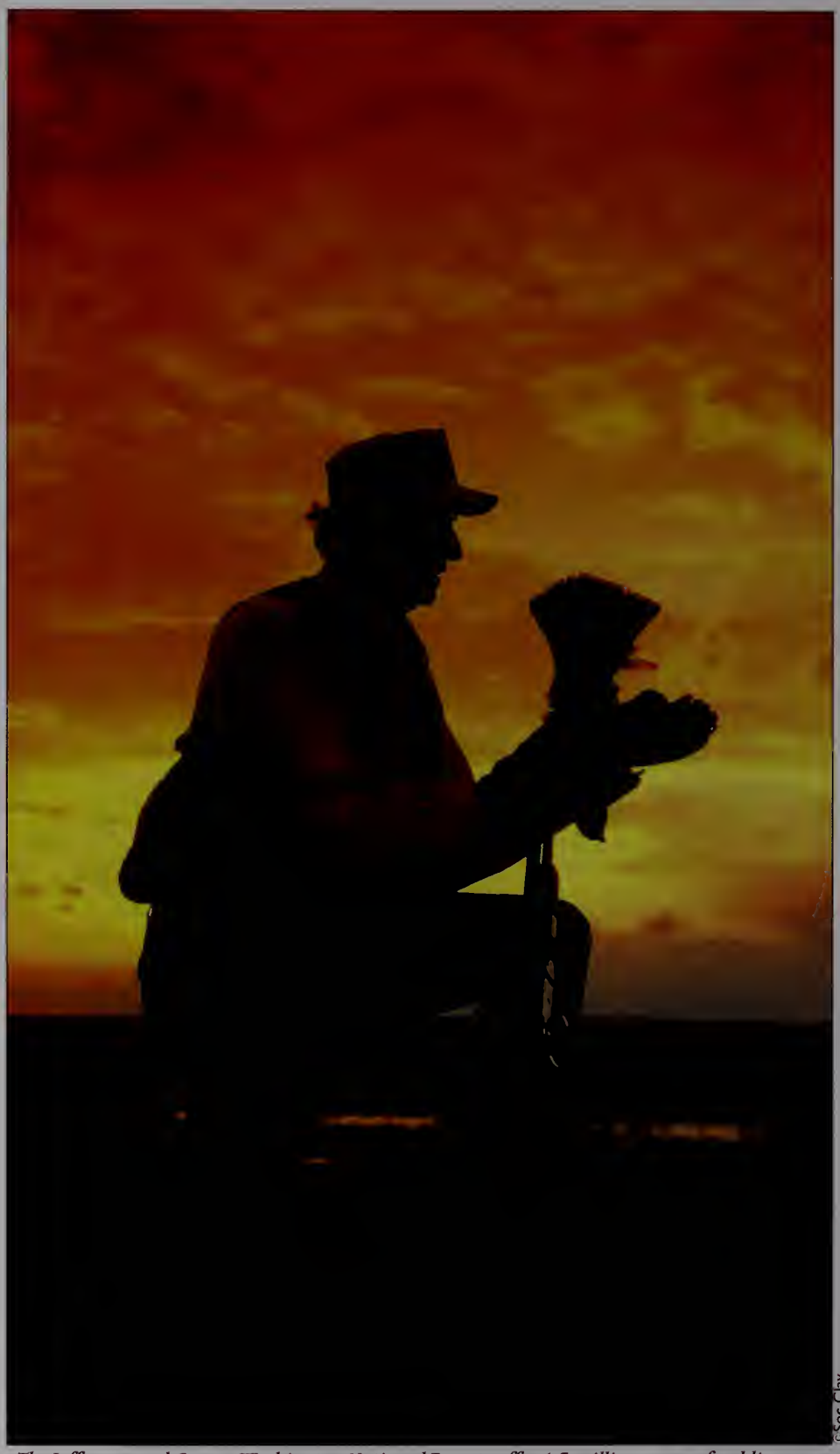
Having a general idea where the birds are isn't enough. You have to think about how to approach the cover so that you'll get a chance for a shot. The terrain should also allow you and your partner to stay roughly 75 to 150 yards apart. If you stay much closer the grouse will flush away from both of you instead of toward one of you.

While no one can predict exactly which way a grouse will go, we do know that flushed birds often fly no more than a couple hundred yards or so before setting down. If you're the proper distance away from your partner when he jumps a bird, you can be in a good position for a shot—occasionally even at a grouse that's slowing down to land instead of rocketing up to escape.





Ruffed grouse are found throughout much of the mountainous regions of Virginia. In the spring a male bird, while in search for a mate, will perch on what is called a "drumming log" and beat its wings in an accelerated motion similar to a drum roll. In the distance the deep beating sound has been likened to that of a muffled engine.



©Soc Clay

The Jefferson and George Washington National Forests offer 1.5 million acres of public hunting for grouse. Department wildlife management areas, like Clinch Mountain, Gathright, Little North Mountain in Goshen, Hidden Valley, G. Richard Thompson, Highland and Rapidan, are good locations for pursuing this magnificent game bird.

If you do hear a bird flush toward your partner, yell "Bird!" so he knows it's coming and can gain a second or two in preparation time.

It's easy to say that a flushed grouse will fly straight for the thickest cover, and you should know such likely escape destinations in a given area. On the other hand, I've also seen flushed birds cross some surprisingly open areas, such as field corners, logging roads, and streams.

Wherever the grouse goes, it's going to get there fast. When a grouse flushes, the bird and the hunter's gun go up almost simultaneously. It's the "almost" that dooms many hunters. This is why what you do before the shot is so important.

3. Before the Shot

I wish we could study the average length of time we have to shoot at a grouse. Even if the bird is in range for several seconds, it isn't usually shootable the whole time because its twisting in and out of brush or trees and just isn't visible.

To help gain some time to shoot, try to move through openings in the cover as much as possible, so that you can spot the bird quickly and have some room to swing your gun. Of course, typical grouse cover often forces a snap shot rather than a swing. But even if you have to "snap," being a bit in the open will let you point either left or right without slamming the barrel into a sapling. Grouse cover is almost always tight, but if you look carefully you can at least avoid the most congested parts of a given covert.

Another edge is to take a tip from international skeet shooters, who start with the gunstock at hip level. They can't shoulder the gun until the target appears, so they devote a lot of practice time to perfecting a quick, smooth gun mount. Grouse hunters ought to practice the same thing. I don't know any grouse hunters who don't shoot trap or skeet to tune up for the field, but I know precious few who take an un-

loaded gun down to the basement and practice shouldering it. A fast, consistent mount will help get on the bird faster and lengthen the time you have to shoot.

The way you carry your gun can be a factor, too. I've often carried mine at "port arms" with the barrel pointing to the left (I'm right-handed). This is a comfortable way to tote a gun, but you'll shoot more quickly if you point the gun out in front of you, keeping the muzzle about eye level. From this position, you can simply bring the stock up—the muzzle is already on the same plane as your eyes. The quicker this coordination is achieved, the better. Holding the gun out in front of you also allows you to turn quickly in either direction rather than favor one or the other.

The way you walk through cover counts, too. We all know that you should stop and go, pausing frequently. The pause unnerves the high-strung birds, prompts them to flush, and better prepares you to shoot. Stopped, you're in position, looking and listening more alertly than when you are in motion. Another key, therefore, is to fight the tendency to get impatient and walk too fast. You should try to move with enough control to stop on a dime and shoot. I don't think I've ever hit a grouse while I was walking or even slowing down. Another disadvantage to walking too fast is that, in typical grouse cover, you'll be watching your feet to keep from tripping instead of looking ahead to spot birds. Grouse often scuttle a step or two before taking off, and it's not impossible to see them or hear them a moment before they lift off.

4. Patterns of Travel

The way two hunters pattern their route through cover can vary, but two things must be kept in mind: Never move directly toward each other, and once you agree on a route don't wander from it. The following patterns have all produced flushes that gave me a high-percentage chance of downing a bird:

The Parallel Approach—Two hunters side by side, 75 to 150 yards apart and moving in the same direction, can often result in one hunter flushing a bird toward the other. Placing one hunter on the edge of cover, perhaps on a logging road or perimeter of an abandoned orchard, will often produce shots at grouse exiting that cover.

The "L" Pattern—In this pattern, one hunter walks about 100 yards ahead while the other stays on the right or left side of him and follows. In my experience, grouse don't always flush ahead of an approaching hunter. They may fly straight back from him, off to one side, or angle back from him. This formation often directs a bird to the hunter off to the side. Continue through the cover, trading places as desired.

The "U" Pattern—Two hunters can start off right next to each other, then move through a covert in a "U." Agree to go a certain distance or to a landmark before meeting and starting again.

These patterns have also worked well for me when trying to reflush a bird. If you flush a bird and miss it, wait a few minutes, go to the point where you lost sight of it, and try either pattern. The bird may still be jumpy and flush farther out, but if you're far enough apart, the bird will often present one hunter with a shot. If you're too close, it will probably flush from you both.

If there are birds in the cover, anybody can flush them. The idea of the drive is simply to plan a route so that a bird flushes toward one of the hunters. Granted, they won't always fly toward either, but in the 15 years I have been possessed by grouse hunting, I've seen drives work often enough to put a lot of faith in them. As in all upland bird hunting, safety principles, such as zones of fire, are vital. Grouse drives are as safe as any other form of bird hunting, if planned and executed with care. □

John Robbins has been hunting grouse for over 15 years and is manager of Youth Programs for the National Rifle Association of America.

©David Hart

When hunting in tight cover, grouse hunters prefer using 12- or 20-gauge shotguns with improved cylinder chokes and No. 7½ loads.

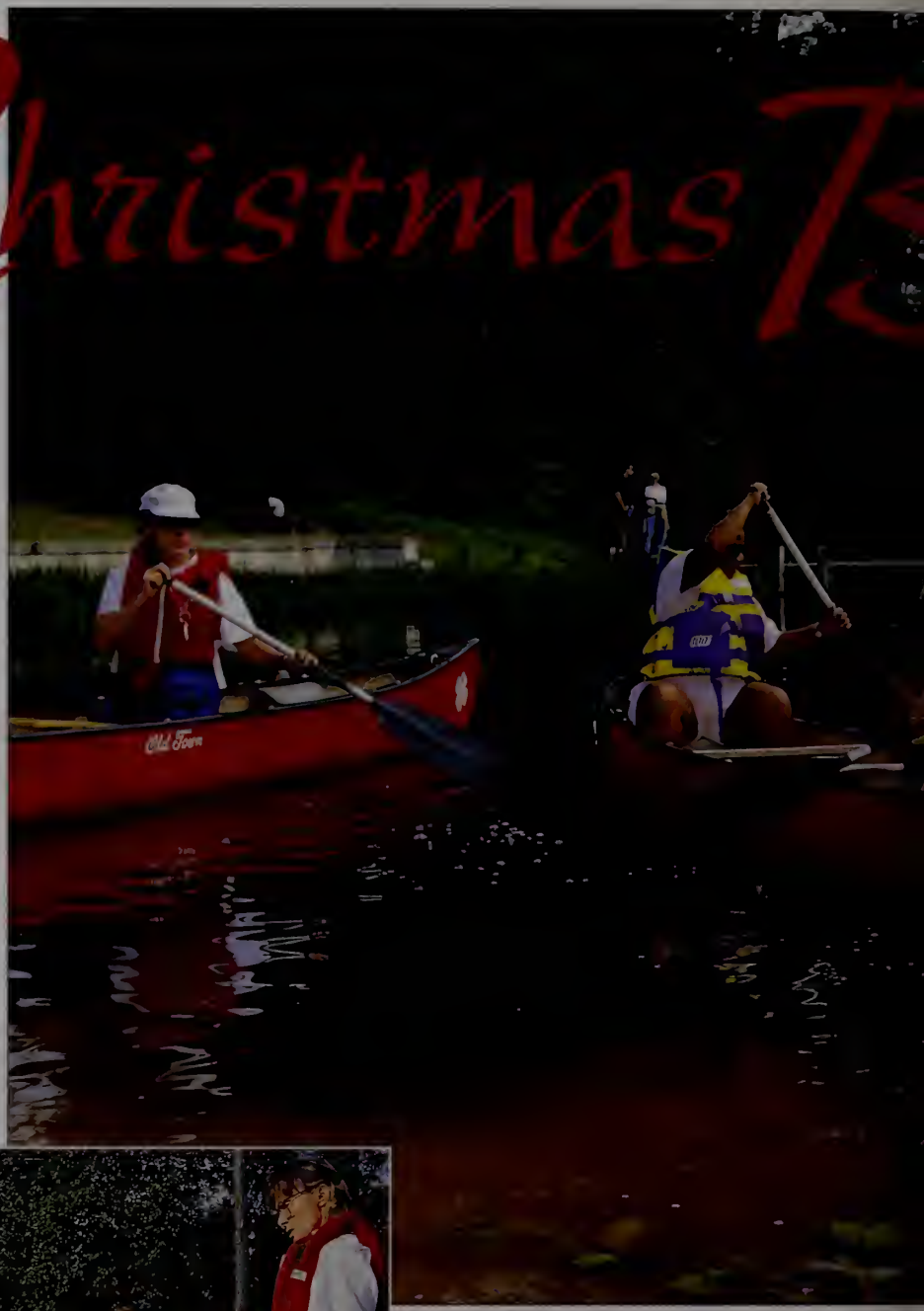
Guns for Grouse Drives

Just about any quick-handling 12- or 20-gauge repeating shotgun will do nicely in the grouse woods. Keep barrel length in the neighborhood of 23-26 inches, and stick to improved cylinder, or at most, modified chokes. The tighter choke will be more useful if birds "flush wild" or if a second or third shot is possible. Popular grouse loads include 2¾-inch, No. 7½s, although 6s and 8s will put birds down, too.

Where to Find Virginia Grouse

Look for grouse in high, mountainous elevations, particularly where 10- to 15-year-old clearcuts may be found. A mixture of pines and hardwoods is more likely than a spot bearing one or the other. Tangles of wild grape, greenbrier, honeysuckle and laurel may provide food sources, depending on the time of year. The southwest counties of the state probably hold the most birds, but areas such as Massanutten Mountain in the George Washington National Forest may be productive, too.

A Christmas T



If there was ever a perfect gift for the woman who loves the outdoors, then this may be it.

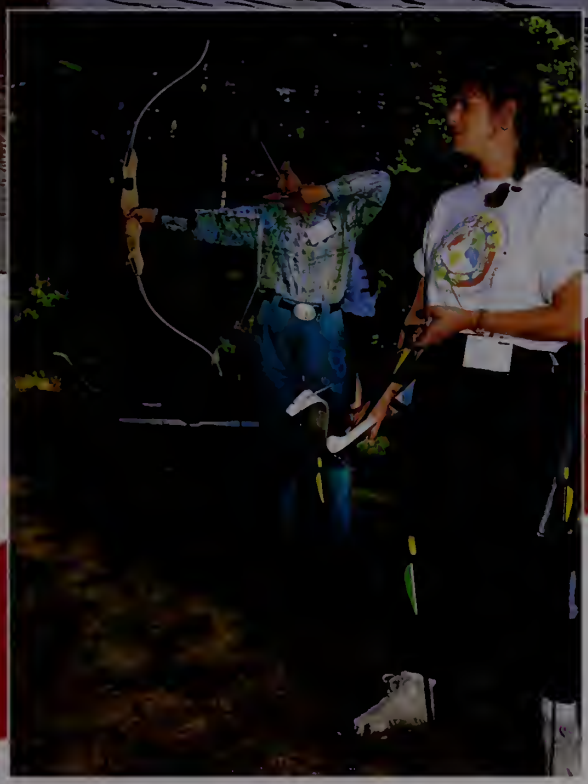
by Emily M. Grey
photos by Dwight Dyke

Are you stumped on a gift for the extraordinary woman or women on your Yuletide list? How about presenting her with an unusual, adventure-of a-lifetime certificate? It is highly likely that this thoughtful token of your love and affection will make you a perpetual hero in her eyes.

Participants who attend the BOW workshops will have the chance to experience outdoor activities, like boating and water safety.

Since September 1996, hundreds of ladies from the Old Dominion and other states have congregated annually at captivating Holiday Lake 4-H Center near Appomattox. They convene "where our nation reunited" to participate in BOW (Becoming an Outdoors-Woman) workshops. This celebrated event is sponsored by the Virginia Department of Game and Inland Fisheries (VDGIF). Hunting and fishing licence revenues help fund the program.

Shooting sports have become extremely popular throughout the county. Capturing that popularity, BOW workshops offer activities in archery and the handling of various other firearms, like shotguns, rifles and muzzleloaders.



Varied Courses, Supportive Atmosphere

Eclectic classes include the following: Archery, Backpacking, Basic Fishing, Bass Fishing, Camping, Canoeing, Dutch Oven Cooking, Fly Fishing, Forest and Wildlife Ecology, Game Care and Cleaning, High Ropes Course, Map and Compass, Muzzleloading, Outdoor First Aid, Outdoor Photography, Sea Kayaking, Stream and Lake Ecology, Wilderness Survival and Quality Woodworking. Students have a difficult time selecting only four of these stimulating weekend subjects. Hence, women keep coming back for more.

In 1990, University of Wisconsin Resource Management Professor, Christine Thomas, designed the BOW program. Dr. Thomas' research revealed that approximately 75 percent of women's participation in outdoor recreation. Lack of childhood exposure is the major obstacle.

In 1991, BOW seminars began as an experiment. Ardent reviews from thousands of women across North America exalted this amazing phenomenon. Offered in 47 states and eight Canadian provinces, these workshops teach women outdoor skills and stimulate their appreciation for the out-of-doors.

Michelle Scala, an outdoor writer from the Northern Neck, has attended every Virginia BOW workshop. She keeps returning because the seminar "has so much to offer," is "well organized," and is held in a "terrific location."

"It makes me so happy to see women being accepted and enjoying the great outdoors," states Michelle. "I want others to be able to experience similar support which I have received from my husband and the BOW program."

Top-Notch Instructors

Everyone praises the superb knowledge, commitment and sincere desire of the instructors. Many of these persons are VDGIF wildlife [illegible], game wardens and educators. Others work or volunteer for other state agencies and private outdoor entities. BOW students are confident that they are receiving sound information.

Annandale resident and homemaker, Norma Epley, particularly enjoys the bonus of mingling with different presenters at meals. "There are ample opportunities to ask additional questions and learn more about their [illegible]."

"The instructors give a good foundation of the [illegible] and sportsmanship [illegible]," explains Sandra [illegible], another BOW repeater from Blacksburg. "The program has opened new doors for my husband and I to share new activities together."

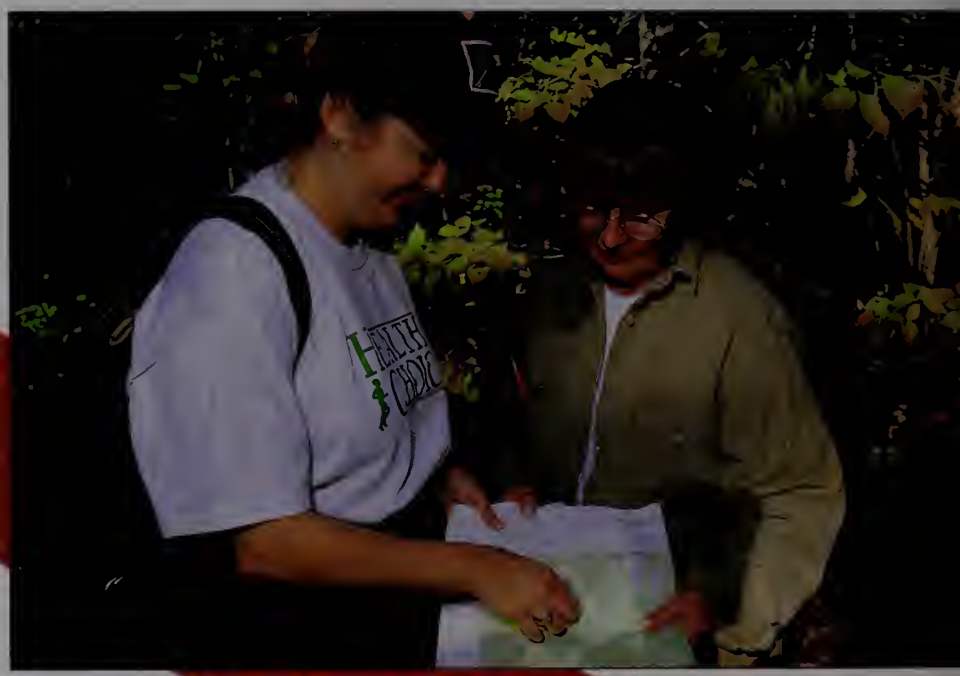
A Relaxed Protocol, A Peaceful Locale

Participants arrive at the 4-H Center on Friday and leave after a luncheon on Sunday. After acclimatizing to their new, sylvan surroundings and rustic, yet comfortable bunkhouses, students are served a scrumptious, get-acquainted lunch in the huge dining facility. Classes commence mid-afternoon.

Friday evening about 12 informal sessions are held. Women may casually meander into each section. Later, a camp sing-along transpires by mystical Holliday Lake (whose spelling is different from the 4-H Center). Often, a resident bullfrog, whip-poor-will or great-horned owl may join in.

Saturday night, instructors

Learning to cook with an old-fashioned dutch oven makes preparing meals in the outdoors easy and tasty.



Map and compass [illegible] like to venture out into unfamiliar wilderness [illegible] hunting.

model the latest in women's outdoor fashions. Registrants can win coveted door prizes, such as attractive wooden birdhouses, binoculars, ammunition and guided hunting and fishing trips. Afterwards, folks sample delicacies from the Game Cleaning and Cooking class. Grilled goose kabobs, rainbow trout, pheasant, venison salad and western fare, like pronghorn antelope jerky, elk or mule deer, are pleasing to the palate.

Nature Appreciation, Common Bonds

A medley of women attend BOW workshops. Co-workers, old friends, mother-daughter and sister teams and individuals enlist. Some ladies are meticulously well-groomed and neatly attired. Others, clad in camouflaged apparel, erase all traces of make-up, except for a little bear grease. Many of these women are outdoor novices.

The noncompetitive, supportive atmosphere of these programs fosters high learning curves and exuberance. Hopefully, participants will develop avid interests in fishing, hunting, archery, ecology and related topics.

BOW seminars unite people with [illegible] friends and [illegible] camping, [illegible] ing and fishing [illegible] er. In turn, Virginia's [illegible] beautiful historical wilds are increasingly valued and protected.

Bev Cox, a Tidewater nurse who describes herself as "an old girl scout," is another veteran of several

Virginia BOW workshops. She is grateful for the chance to interact with numerous women with varied backgrounds who are interested in the outdoors.

"If more people do not learn these skills," Bev opines, "conservation efforts may stall at some point. The more persons who care about the program, the better."

BOW courses help build confidence. Enrollees are given hands-on opportunities to learn new skills, brush-up on old ones, meet people who share similar pursuits and temporarily escape mundane stresses. Students depart the workshops feeling refreshed and ready to tackle the out-of-doors and many of life's curves.

As a student at the initial workshop two years ago, this writer confronted a crossroad. BOW helped me "refind myself," reconnect with positive people and nature and rediscover peace.

The following two Mays, I re- [illegible] as a co-in- [illegible] I [illegible]

challenge themselves to reach greater heights in outdoor recreation skills is a golden moment. Witnessing each individual's budding or rekindled appreciation in nature gives me hope for our state and nation's direction in conservation.

A Bargain

A mere $150 buys a fabulous BOW weekend. Included in this economical rate are delicious, nourishing meals; clean, snug lodging; four classes taught by expert, supportive instructors; valuable raffle prizes; gratis T-shirts and other perks.

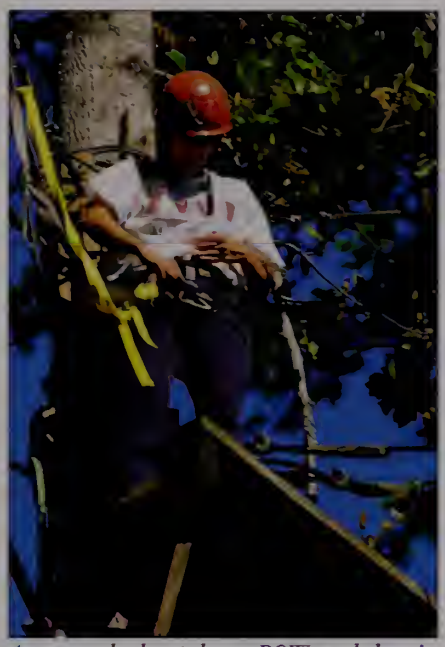
"The price is so reasonable. You really can't ask for any more," says Norma Epley. "We are very lucky to have a program like this in Virginia."

We are also fortunate to have Libby Norris as our BOW coordinator from the outset. Her enthusiasm, fairness, dedication and steady guidance has created one of the best run workshops in America.

The entire staff at Holiday Lake 4-H center are accommodating. Their gracious hospitality makes everyone feel especially welcome.

[illegible] your lady friend with an [illegible] Christmas BOW certificate.

Volunteers who teach the workshops are skilled hunter education instructors, wildlife biologists, law enforcement personnel and other interested sports enthusiasts.



Anyone who has taken a BOW workshop is quick to comment on the challenges of the high ropes course. There is nothing like dangling high off the ground to give a person a totally different outlook on life.

A rod and reel, hiking shoes, bow and arrows, canoe and other outdoor goodies make ideal stocking or garage stuffers. Don't be surprised when your friend returns from her BOW weekend a little woodsier, wiser and merrier.

The Commonwealth offers spin-off BOW courses at different venues. These diverse classes include Deer and Turkey Hunting Weekends, Sporting Clays Clinic (trapshooting skeet), Fly Fishing (day and weekend clinics) and Wilderness Survival and Orienteering Clinic.

The 1999 Virginia BOW annual workshop will occur at Holiday Lake 4-H Educational Center in mid-May. To purchase a BOW certificate or to learn more, contact Libby Norris, Program Coordinator, Virginia Women in the Outdoors, Department of Game and Inland Fisheries, 5806 Mooretown Road, Williamsburg, Virginia 23188. E-mail: lnorris@dgif.state.va.us Telephone: (757) 253-4180; FAX: (757) 253-4182 ☐

Emily Grey is an attorney, freelance writer and active participant of BOW workshops.

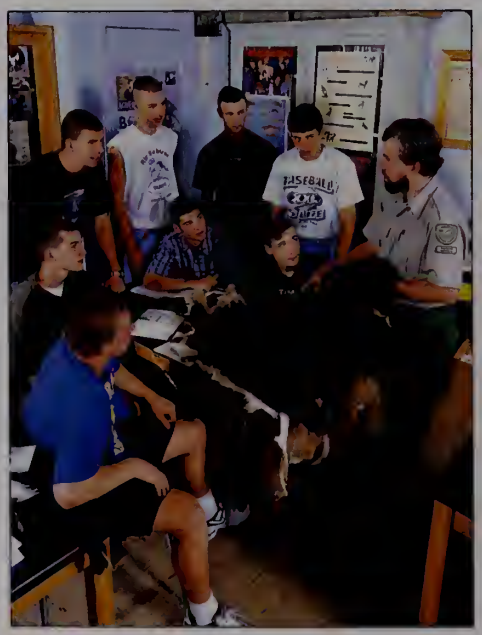
Students are learning that farming and wildlife conservation go hand in hand.

by George Bowers
photos by Dwight Dyke

Future Farme

There are a group of students in our public schools learning about trout characteristics, waterfowl habits, and the aging of deer jaws. They're not in the biology classes, but are enrolled in one of a number of courses in agricultural education that teach about Virginia's wildlife.

Over the years, the students of these classes have made a major impact on wildlife habitat in the state and have contributed much to game management as well as having developed a healthy environmental ethic. Long before other curricula began capitalizing on student interest in the outdoors, Agricultural Education and the Future Farmers of America (FFA) have consistently worked to provide sound environmental education. The FFA is the national youth organization for students enrolled in agricultural education, and there are over 10,000 members in Virginia.



Fred Frenzel, III, wildlife biologist assistant, talks to students about bear management in an FFA class at Central High School in Woodstock, Virginia.

Agricultural education began in Virginia in 1917 to provide vocational training to high school students interested in becoming farmers. Since game management in Virginia has always been closely tied to our farms and farmers, a relationship began to grow between the agricultural education programs and Virginia's wild resources.

Since those early days, agricultural education has changed. It now provides courses beyond production agriculture, like Agribusiness, Horticulture, and Equine Science. While local programs vary across the Commonwealth, agricultural education course offerings in many

localities today also include Introduction to Natural Resources; Forestry, Wildlife, and Soil Management; and Natural Resource Business Management, as well as Ecology and Conservation.

As a result of instruction in these courses, some great things are happening in the agricultural education classrooms and laboratories across Virginia.

For many years, the Virginia Department of Forestry (VDF) has provided free pine seedlings to FFA members across Virginia. Members have planted pine seedlings on countless acres, as well as purchased additional trees through VDF. In many areas, FFA members are involved with the VDF "Keep Virginia Green" fire fighting program, which uses these high school students to help suppress forest fires across Virginia.

Many chapters mix and distribute seed for planting wildlife plots around their home or farm. Extra seed is often mixed and a demonstration plot or plots are planted by the chapter. Some localities sponsor a wildlife food plot contest that encourages greater development of these areas.

Several chapters have constructed nature trails in their communities and have conducted tours on these trails to provide balanced environmental education for younger, elementary students. Such activities not only benefit the elementary students, but also develop outdoor and communication skills in the high school students.

Many chapters helped the Virginia Department of Game and Inland Fisheries (VDGIF) to stock trout in streams across Virginia. This provides valuable hands-on training as well as a much needed public service to the community and state.

Some local chapters have cooperated with local groups, like Safari Club International, to collect and process deer for donation to local food banks. FFA members learn to skin, butcher and cut meat from one of Virginia's most valuable natural resources and others benefit as well.

In many counties of Virginia, it is the FFA chapter that has been re-

rs of America

George Bowers, who teaches the FFA class at Central High School, assists students in how to properly measure deer antlers. For years, FFA chapters have sponsored an annual Big Buck and Doe contest for their members. Students, who also hunt, are encouraged to keep track of their hunting hours and experiences, to help them become more knowledgeable about their surroundings in the outdoors.

Students gain valuable knowledge about various wildlife species. George Bowers teaches his students how to age a deer by using its jaw and teeth.

sponsible for administering the Hunter Safety Program in their area. FFA chapters also record radio spots reminding the public to observe safe and ethical hunting practices. The Trapper Training Course, which certifies participants in trapping, has also been sponsored by some local chapters.

It would be difficult to find an agricultural education program in Virginia that has not constructed at least one birdhouse or bird feeder. These are common shop projects for students that are then taken home to benefit birds. Several chapters regularly construct wood duck boxes for donation to VDGIF and others construct special nesting boxes or cages for the Wildlife Center of Virginia.

A major emphasis in any natural resource program in Virginia includes instruction in the management of our soil, water, and forests. Each of these units includes information on how to promote wildlife habitat and provide for their needs.

mote this recreational activity as well as provide some basic instruction and experience for participants. Aquaculture is an instructional unit and some schools are raising catfish, trout, or other species in ponds or tanks.

Many classes have taken field trips to wildlife related locations, including trout farms, taxidermy shops, game plots, and the U.S. National Forest. Most chapters also have game wardens as regular guest speakers at their meetings.

In the "old days," before guns were banned from schools, most FFA chapters conducted an annual rifle shooting contest in conjunction with the fall hunting seasons. Students even carried rifles with them to school on the bus and it was one of the most popular events. A few schools have instituted an air rifle program, but most rifle contests are in the old chapter scrapbooks.

Many FFA chapters do, however, continue to sponsor their annual Big Buck and Doe contests for FFA members and some students organize a venison feast for other faculty members from the year's harvest.

In some programs, students keep track of their hunting hours and experiences, they summarize their findings to calculate buck to doe ratios and to discover which period of the day is best to spot game. They analyze data to determine how weather conditions affect different wildlife species and also seek to find the average number of hours in the woods needed to spot a buck.

Many students gain experience aging deer jaws, identifying game animals as well as furbearers and nongame species. Students prepare presentations on wildlife species and often present these to community groups. In addition, many chapters construct wildlife education displays for local fairs and other events.

In the last few years, agriculture students have participated in the Envirothon competition, which tests students knowledge in the areas of Wildlife, Forestry, Aquatics, Pesticide Use, and Soils. In addition, each team must present an oral solution to judges on an environmental problem selected by the judges. This program is organized and operated by the Soil and Water Conservation Districts.

Building homes for waterfowl and birds give students a chance to have some hands-on experience that benefits them, and wildlife.

Mike Helsley, from Central High School, was last years winner of the Wildlife Management Proficiency Award. This award recognizes FFA students accomplishments in wildlife management.

Even in agricultural production courses, considerations for environmental concepts, such as edge and wildlife corridors, are stressed. Students participate in zoning exercises, land use discussions, and public hearings.

Some chapters have sponsored and conducted fishing clinics to pro-

FFA chapters have long worked with state agencies, like the Virginia Department of Game and Inland Fisheries and the Virginia Department of Forestry, to help stock trout, put out wildlife food plots and plant trees.

The FFA established many avenues for students and chapters to be recognized for their accomplishments in wildlife management. Each student of agricultural education is expected to conduct a supervised agricultural experience, which is a hands-on learning opportunity outside the classroom, designed to meet the student's career goals and provide an extension of the classroom. Projects, such as pond management, aquaculture, wildlife plots, and others, have enhanced wildlife populations across Virginia and helped students become responsible wildlife managers.

The FFA sponsors proficiency awards in the areas of wildlife management with medals and certificates on the local level, plaques and checks on the state level, and additional recognition and travel for national winners.

In addition, Virginia has sponsored a Chapter Wildlife Award for many years. The purpose of this award is to encourage chapters to conduct activities in wildlife conservation. It is quite a coveted award that annually presents a plaque to one chapter in the state, based on the applications submitted by chapters. Winning chapters normally conduct a combination of many of the above activities and often go beyond by assisting VDGIF personnel in creating fish habitat in a new lake, preparing wild turkey food plots, or other major activities.

Over the years, the students in agricultural education and FFA have played an invaluable, if low profile, role in Virginia's wildlife management. We look forward to continuing to contribute to Virginia's natural resources and appreciate the cooperation from the Virginia Department of Game and Inland Fisheries. ☐

George Bowers is a teacher at Central High School in Woodstock, Virginia.

Journal

©Dwight Dyke

Colonel William Olmsted Antozzi 1912–1998

Retired Army Colonel William Olmsted Antozzi, 86, longtime Boating Safety Officer for the Virginia Department of Game and Inland Fisheries, passed away on October 22, 1998.

Colonel Antozzi was instrumental in laying the foundation for the Department's boating education training program. Over the years, he made hundreds of presentations to individuals and groups about the need for safe boating. The Colonel was also an avid writer and published hundreds of articles on boating and water safety during his time with the Department.

Colonel Antozzi was a member of the U.S. Coast Guard Auxiliary for almost 30 years and served as the Captain of Division III, District 5 and as Commander of Flotilla 32.

The Colonel was born June 19, 1912, in Claremont, N.Y. and was educated at Syracuse University. He was commissioned a 2nd lieutenant, U.S. Army and in 1941 and retired as Chief of Staff, Ft. Lee, Virginia.

The staff of *Virginia Wildlife* magazine, the Department of Game and Inland Fisheries and all his many friends will miss the Colonel. He was always one of the brightest spots in our lives.

Virginia Conservation License Plates Are Going That Extra Mile

Anyone who thinks that the first information superhighway was the Internet should take a look around on his next drive into work. He will be sure to notice that most of the cars, trucks and vans around him proclaim some sort of message. From vanity plates to bumper stickers to window decals, drivers are proclaiming their alma maters, political views and sense of humor.

You may have seen license plates with mallards, deer or bass on them and wondered what they were, what they meant and how to get one. In 1992, the Department of Motor Vehicles and the Department of Game and Inland Fisheries began a program, which was initiated by the General Assembly, to produce license plates that both raised money for wildlife and increased awareness for the need of conservation. The result has been extraordinary: five different plate designs around 12,000 plates on the road and over $775,000 raised for Virginia's wildlife.

Plates are available from any DMV service center in Virginia. The cost is moderate–$25.00 annually, with $15.00 of that price going to the Game Protection Fund. With five designs: mallard duck, white-tailed deer, largemouth bass, brook trout and wild turkey, there is sure to be one to please any sportsman. More designs for the future are being planned.

A conservation plate is a good way to send a message to other motorists; to get them to stop for a moment and think about Virginia's wildlife and the help it needs from them. But our plates do more than that; by buying a plate you actually contribute to the welfare and survival of these creatures. It's a message that has true meaning. ☐

December Afield

by Jack Randolph

December is truly the sportsman's month. Just about all of the hunting seasons are open and fishing is just about as good as it is going to get. Let's look at the hunting first.

This is a deer hunter's month. In the western part of the state the bowhunters have returned to the woods and the black powder fans have their late season before them. In the east, with the exception of the extreme southeast, the deer season for hunters with dogs and guns remains open all month. Bear, too, are legal game in specified counties.

Usually, for the hunter December starts out quietly. Following November's hectic opening and the Thanksgiving holiday, interest seems to slack off until the antlerless deer seasons commence to open later in the month.

There are more doves in Virginia this month than at any other time during the hunting season, but the birds are well spread out and are often found in fallow fields or wheat stubble.

Waterfowl hunters have the whole month to enjoy, but their fortunes rest heavily on the weather. The colder and nastier, the better. Of course, good duck hunting weather is not good deer hunting weather, but hunters are a difficult lot to please.

Good duck hunting weather is terrible fishing weather, but this is the month when the biggest striped bass are caught in the Chesapeake Bay as well as in our reservoirs. We can expect to see lots of activity in the Virginia Beach area, where anglers vie for the title of "Striped Bass Champion of the World" in a new contest that runs through January.

With the water temperatures in the 50s, the larger striped bass are on the move and fishing can be excellent from Reedville all the way to Sandbridge, with the Bridge Tunnel being the epicenter of the action.

Depending upon the weather we can also expect to see schools of jumbo bluefish on the offshore wrecks, where chumming for them is gaining in popularity.

Conditions should also be about perfect right now for tautog along the Chesapeake Bay Bridge Tunnel and on the inshore wrecks.

In freshwater, this is the time to catch the larger striped bass. This species is active when the water temperatures are in the 50s and waters, such as Smith Mountain Lake, Leesville Reservoir, Lake Gaston, Buggs Island Lake and Lake Anna, should be productive. Lake Chesdin and Little Creek Reservoir at Toano should also be hot for stripers.

The season for catching striped bass in the upper reaches, of such tidal rivers as the Appomattox, Chickahominy, James, Mattaponi, Pamunkey and Rappahannock rivers, is open through this month and anglers pitching bucktails, Rat-L-Traps and other shad-like lures should do well.

This is also an excellent month to catch big largemouth bass. When one considers the few anglers on the water, as compared to April, the number of citations caught is surprising. The cool waters are also a turn-on for crappie, yellow perch and all of the members of the pike family.

Of course, December is a month for the trapper, too. Nearly all furs are prime now and most trapping seasons are open.

And, finally, December is the month when families come together to celebrate the holidays. Some of us will go into the woods in search of Christmas greens. Remember, the club mosses, often called "creeping pine" or "running cedar" are growing scarce and should not be taken.

Also, be aware that our native mistletoe is poisonous and care should be taken to place it out of reach of children.

This is also the appropriate time to stop for a few moments and marvel at the wonderful, natural world around us and to thank its Creator for making us a part of it. □

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RECIPES

by Joan Cone

How to Enjoy Your Duck Breasts

If you have ever plucked a wild duck, you know it's a chore. This is why many hunters breast out their ducks. All you lose is a small amount of tough meat on the legs.

When freezing skinless duck breasts, wrap each tightly in plastic wrap and then place in a heavy duty freezer bag, removing as much air as you can. Vacuum packing is preferable.

Menu

Corn Chowder
Sherried Mallard Breasts
Dijon-Glazed Carrots
Cranberry-Pear Salad
Easy Fruitcake

Corn Chowder

½ cup chopped onion
½ cup chopped celery
1 tablespoon butter or margarine
1 large potato, peeled and diced
1 cup milk
1 can (16 ounces) cream style corn
½ teaspoon thyme
Grated Parmesan cheese

In medium saucepan, cook onion and celery in butter until tender. Add potato; cook and stir 2 to 3 minutes. Add milk, corn and thyme. Cover and simmer 20 to 30 minutes until potato is tender. Top each serving with 1 teaspoon Parmesan cheese. Makes 4 servings.

Note: For low sodium chowder (20 mg per serving), use unsalted butter or margarine and no salt added cream style corn.

Sherried Mallard Breasts

⅓ cup flour
¼ teaspoon garlic powder
½ teaspoon ground rosemary
2 boneless, skinless whole mallard breasts, cut into 1-inch strips
3 tablespoons olive oil
2 tablespoons butter or margarine
2 cups fresh mushrooms, thinly sliced
2 large Vidalia onions, thinly sliced
½ cup cream sherry

In a large plastic food storage bag, combine flour, garlic powder and ground rosemary. Add duck strips and shake to coat. In a 12-inch skillet, heat oil and butter over medium heat. Add duck strips and cook for 3 to 5 minutes or until meat is browned, turning frequently. Add remaining ingredients except sherry. Cook over medium heat 3 to 5 minutes or until vegetables are tender-crisp, stirring frequently. Add sherry. Cook for 5 to 8 minutes or until meat is desired doneness. Serve over hot, cooked wild rice. Makes 4 servings.

Dijon-Glazed Carrots

3 cups packaged, peeled baby carrots
2 tablespoons butter or margarine
2 tablespoons firmly packed light brown sugar
2 tablespoons Grey Poupon Dijon Mustard
Chopped fresh parsley, optional

In a covered, medium saucepan, cook carrots in small amount of boiling water for 8 to 10 minutes or until tender-crisp; drain. Remove from pan and keep warm. In same saucepan, over medium heat, melt butter or margarine. Stir in brown sugar and mustard until combined. Stir in carrots. Cook and stir for 2 minutes or until carrots are glazed. Sprinkle with parsley, if desired. Makes 4 servings.

Note: For lower sodium, use Grey Poupon Honey Mustard.

Cranberry-Pear Salad

1 can (8 ounces) jellied cranberry sauce, chilled
1 can (16 ounces) pear halves, drained
4 lettuce leaves
2 tablespoons whipped cream cheese
2 tablespoons sour cream
2 tablespoons chopped pecans

Cut cranberry sauce into 8 slices. Cut each pear half lengthwise into 2 pieces. Place lettuce on 4 individual salad plates. Arrange 2 slices of cranberry sauce on each lettuce leaf. Arrange pears evenly on cranberry sauce in spoke fashion. Combine cream cheese and sour cream and spoon one tablespoon cream mixture in center of pears. Sprinkle with pecans. Makes 4 servings.

Easy Fruitcake

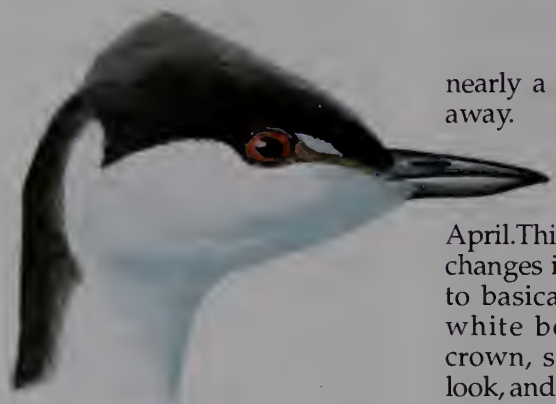
2½ cups flour
1 teaspoon baking soda
2 eggs, slightly beaten
1 jar (28 ounces) ready-to-use mince meat
1 can (14 ounces) sweetened condensed milk
1 cup *each* of mixed candied fruit and chopped dates

Preheat oven to 300° F. Grease a 9-inch tube pan: line with wax paper and grease again. Sift together flour and baking soda and set aside. In a large bowl, combine remaining ingredients and blend in dry ingredients. Pour into prepared pan. Bake for 1 hour and 50 minutes or until toothpick placed in center comes out clean. Makes one 9-inch cake. ☐

Naturally Wild

by Spike Knuth

Horned Grebe



Spike Knuth

Maybe you've seen one on a cold, gray December day. You walked up to the shore of a lake, pond or tidal river and saw a duck-like bird with head high and alert. Then in a twinkling of an eye it arched into a quick dive, surfacing nearly a minute later 20 or 30 feet away.

The horned grebe visits and winters in Virginia mainly from October to April.This is a bird that completely changes its looks in fall and winter, to basically grayish-black above, white below with the blackish crown, sometimes with a crested look, and white cheeks and neck.

Only if you happen to see a very late migrant in May do you even see a hint of its breeding plumage. On its breeding grounds, the horned grebe sports a blackish-olive ruffs or cheeks with horn-like crests of yellow ochre on either side of the top of its head, from which it gets its name. At this time, it has a brownish-black back with necks and sides of rufous and a white belly.

The straight, slender bill quickly distinguishes it from its more common cousin the pied-billed grebe. The feet of grebes are set far back on its body which gives it great diving and swimming abilities, but makes it difficult for them to walk on or take off from land. Its toes have scalloped or lobed flaps that fold back on a forward swimming stroke, but become rigid on a power stroke. Grebes are also capable of sinking out of sight by taking in or expelling air, swelling or shrinking their size, to alter their displacement. They favor small fish, but feed on all types of aquatic animals—tadpoles, shrimp, leeches, insects, etc—as well as some aquatic vegetation. They also eat feathers and often feed their young feathers, apparently as an aid to digestion.

Grebes must run over the water to become airborn. In flight, horned grebes fly with quick wing beats, showing white wing speculums. Their flight is straight and direct with head held below body level and feet hanging out behind, very much like a loon.

The horned grebes nest in the prairie marshes of North America, often in small colonies on larger bodies of water. They build a floating nest constructed of a muddy mass of vegetation anchored to cattails or other emergent vegetation. The fuzzy young can swim and dive shortly after hatching and grow quickly.

Horned grebes migrate beginning in September, moving along inland freshwater rivers and lakes. Staying there until the freeze comes, they then move toward the coast by November and December. Here they spend a great deal of time on saltwater, seeking out sheltered bays, flats at high tide, sounds and large tidal rivers, brackish ponds adjacent to saltwater and offshore beyond the heavy surf.

In Virginia look for it on the larger inland reservoirs, tidal rivers, Chesapeake Bay, Back Bay and Chincoteague National Wildlife Refuge. □

On The Water

by Kathy Gillikin, Boating Education Instructor

Cold Weather Boating Safety Tips

If you're an angler, hunter or enjoy boating during the winter, please keep these safety suggestions in mind as you plan your excursion. Winter boaters who come in contact with cold water can become a victim to hypothermia. This is a condition in which the body loses heat faster than it can produce it and can result in a dangerous reduction of the body's inner core temperature. A person can quickly experience a sudden cold shock reflex. This reflex causes them to immediately gasp for air, which can result in water entering the lungs causing the person to drown.

These tips and hypothermia chart below will help you better understand the importance of safe boating during cold weather.

1. Watch the weather report for the area where you plan to go boating.

2. Plan ahead and write down where you will be boating, what time you will leave, your boat's registration number and car license plate, who you will be boating with, your expected time of return, etc. Leave this float plan with your family or friends.

3. Eat a nutritious meal before you leave home, including something warm.

4. Take warm liquids, water and some snack foods with you.

5. Do **not** drink alcohol while boating. Alcohol helps cool your body more quickly.

6. Wear wool or polyester clothing in layers to adjust for varying temperatures while boating. Dress for the temperature of the water, not the air.

7. Take safety equipment with you on the boat, such as:
- ☆ flares
- ☆ throw ring or rescue device and extra line
- ☆ Type I or II personal flotation device (PFDs) for each passenger on board—designed to turn most persons face-up in the water. (The law requires that PFDs be U.S. Coast Guard approved.)
- ☆ flashlight
- ☆ sound signal device
- ☆ matches
- ☆ floating keychain
- ☆ extra clothing and shoes, blankets

8. Wear your PFD...correctly. No one predicts an accident, so be prepared.

9. Watch the weather frequently while boating (from the west). Return to shore immediately when the weather changes for the worse.

10. Cancel your float plan when you arrive home to let people know you are safe.

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Hypothermia Chart

If the Water Temp. (F) is...	Exhaustion or Unconsciousness	Expected Time of Survival is...
32.5	Under 15 Min.	Under 15-45 Min.
32.5–40.0	15–30 Min.	30–90 Min
40–50	30–60 Min.	1–3 Hr.
50–60-	1–2 Hr.	1–6 Hr.
60–70	2–7 Hr.	2–40 Hr.
70–80	3–12 Hr.	3–Indefinitely
over 80	Indefinitely	Indefinitely

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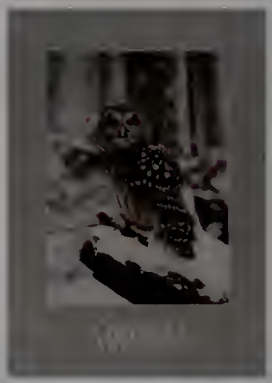
Just $8 each. Specify: freshwater game fish (21"X 36"), wood duck, barred owl, white-tailed deer (all 19 1/2" X 27 1/2"), saltwater fish (21 3/4" X 34").
Make check payable to: Treasurer of Virginia and send to: Virginia Wildlife Poster Offer, VDGIF, P.O. Box 11104, Richmond, VA 23230-1104.



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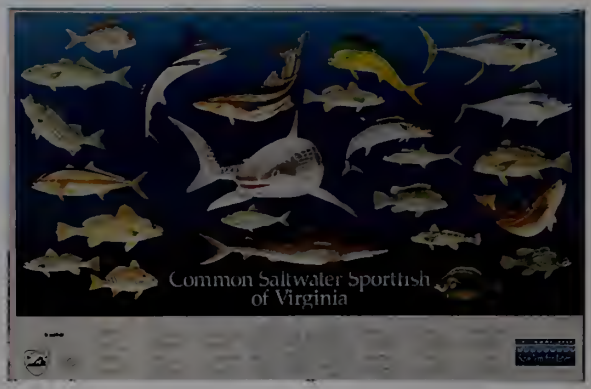

"Winter Comfort" by Bob Henley, a signed and numbered limited edition (950) print 13" X 19 1/2". $45.00 each.

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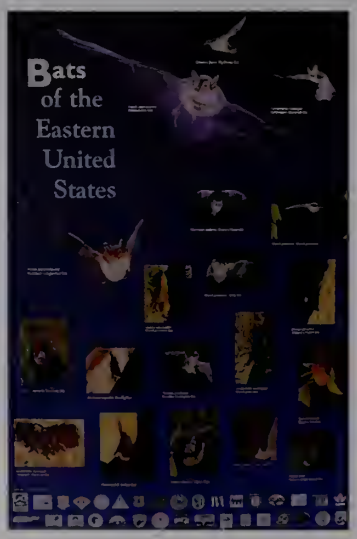
BAT POSTER



The attractive poster, Bats of the Eastern United States (24" X 36"), is only $10. Includes information about each species found in the eastern United States. Checks should be payable to the Treasurer of Virginia, care of Mary Beth Murr, Nongame Program, Virginia Department of Game and Inland Fisheries, P.O. Box 11104, Richmond, VA 23230-1104.

HATS OFF TO VIRGINIA WILDLIFE

High profile

Low profile

The staff of *Virginia Wildlife* is proud to offer, for the very first time, *Virginia Wildlife* caps. Each cap is high quality, 100% cotton and embroidered with the *Virginia Wildlife* magazine logo. One size fits all. We have two attractive styles. The cost is only $15.00 each, which includes shipping and handling. Make check payable to the Treasurer of Virginia. Allow 4 to 5 weeks for delivery.

Caps may be ordered by writing to Virginia Wildlife Caps, Virginia Department of Game and Inland Fisheries, P.O. Box 11104, Richmond, VA 23230-1104

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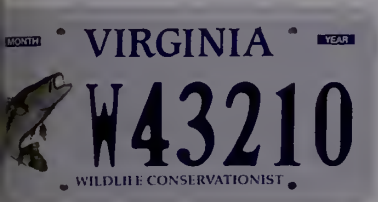
LICENSE PLATES



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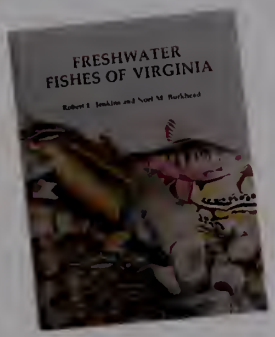
BOOKS

The Reptiles of Virginia
by Joseph C. Mitchell. $40 plus $2.25 each postage and handling. This is the first complete catalogue of Virginia's snakes, lizards, and turtles. Featuring 63 full-color illustrations, distribution maps and easy-to-use identification keys in 384 pages. Order from: Smithsonian Institution Press, Blue Ridge Summit, PA 17294-0900. Call toll-free 1-800-782-4612.



Freshwater Fishes of Virginia
by Robert E. Jenkins and Noel M. Burkhead. $85. This authority on Virginia's fishes takes an in-depth look at 210 fish species. Over 1,000 pages with 40 color plates. Order from: American Fisheries Society, Publication Fulfillment, P.O. Box 1020, Sewickley, PA 15143.

1998-99 VIRGINIA WATERFOWL PRINT AND STAMP

Seen from the Virginia shore is Rob Leslie's vision of mallards flying over the falls of the Potomac River at Great Falls National Park. Information about prints and stamps of this spectacular Northern Virginia scene are available from Sport'en Art, 1-800-382-5723.

BOUND VOLUMES

Virginia Wildlife 1996, $15.00.
In one handsomely bound volume, you can have all 12 issues of *Virginia Wildlife* at your fingertips. A ready source of information and reference material for young and old.
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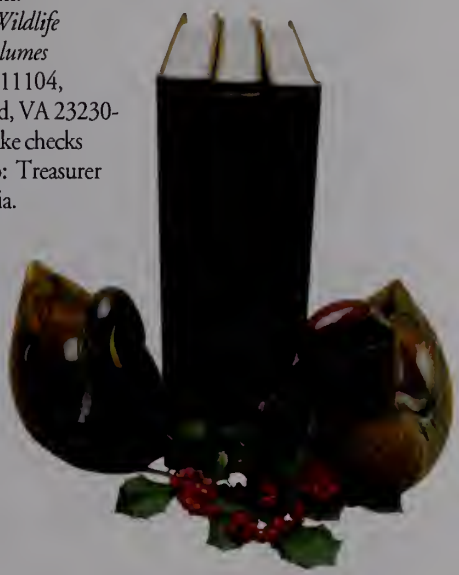

Photo Tips

by Lynda Richardson

A Photographer's Holiday Wish List

As the Canada geese pass overhead and the whitetail bucks polish their antlers, it is time to reflect on family, tradition and...yipes...what gifts you're going to get everyone for the holidays! The following are recommendations for gift ideas for that favorite photographer on your list.

How about a book or two? Since 1984, the most prestigious wildlife oriented photographic competition in the world has been the "Wildlife Photographer of the Year" competition sponsored by British Gas and organized by *BBC Wildlife Magazine* and the Natural History Museum. Last year, the judges looked over more than 18,000 entries. For the past eight years, all winners in 16 categories have been published in book form. This year, watch for *Wildlife Photographer of the Year: Portfolio 8*, which represents the 1998 winners. The winning work of photographers from around the world is printed in full color, published by Fountain Press Limited and sells for $39.95. This series of books can usually be ordered through any large bookstore chain.

Over the years I've become interested in the history of wildlife photography. One interesting book I've come across is *William L. Finley, Pioneer Wildlife Photographer*, authored by Worth Mathewson and published by Oregon State University Press (ISBN 0-87071-351-5). I think it runs about $40. You wouldn't believe what Finley went though to capture his wildlife images using large 5 X 7 cameras and chemically coated glass plates as film.

You can find other interesting wildlife photography-oriented books by snooping around used bookstores and antique shops. So far, I've found *The Art of Bird Photography* by Eric Hosking and Cyril Newberry, which was first published in 1944. *Stalking Big Game With A Camera* by Marius Maxwell was published in 1924. Such books make great presents for any wildlife photographer.

If your photographer wants to photograph critters in Europe don't miss *The Guide to the National Parks and Other Wild Places of Britain and Europe* by Bob Gibbons. This valuable book lists all the national parks in over 30 countries, from Iceland to Cyprus. It was published in 1994 by New Holland (Publishers) Ltd. and sells for approximately $25. The ISBN # is 1-85368-2373.

©Lynda Richardson

Photo backpacks, vests, tripods, slide viewing loupes, tick repellent, lightboxes, computer software, teaching videos and field identification books are all great presents for a photographer. If you can't decide what to get why not order a catalog from Leonard Rue Enterprises, Inc.. Get the catalog, hand it to your photo buddy and have them circle what they want. To contact L.L. Rue simply call: (908) 362-6616 anytime Monday – Friday from 8:30 a.m. to 5:00 p.m. EST or visit their website at: http://www.rue.com/. Send e-mail inquiries to rue@rue.com.

Good luck in your search for the perfect gift and Happy Holidays!

News You Can Use

The North American Nature Photography Association (NANPA) is having it's next annual forum on February 3–7, 1999, in San Diego, California, at the Town & Country Resort Hotel. As always, there will be an incredible offering of seminars and opportunities to hang out with some of the top photographers in the business. There will be a trade show, portfolio reviews, and book signings. Don't miss this exciting opportunity! For more information call: NANPA at (303) 422-8527, (303) 422-8894 (fax) or write to NANPA's Fourth Nature Photography Forum, 10200 W. 44th Ave., Suite 304, Wheatridge, CO 80033-2840 or e-mail to nanpa@resourcenter.com. Better hurry as these events sell out fast! I hope to see you there!

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